



THEY KNOW THEY NEED GOD

January 9/10, 2021

Matthew 5:3

Pastor Daniel Hahn

MESSAGE NOTES

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. — Matthew 5:3

Being “poor in spirit” means we come to live by three realities:

1. Without God, we are spiritually bankrupt and totally lost. Will we admit that?

It would be well from the beginning to picture yourself as a poor, naked, miserable wretch, perishing of hunger, who knows but one man of whom he can ask or hope for help; or as a sick person, covered with sores and ready to die unless some pitiful physician will take him in hand and heal him. These are true pictures of our condition before God. Your soul is more bare of heavenly treasure than the poor beggar is of earthly possessions. ... your soul is infinitely more sin-sick than that sore stricken patient, and God alone can heal you.

— Francois Fenelon, 17th c French priest

The teaching of the Sermon on the Mount produces despair in the natural man — the very thing Jesus means it to do. The Kingdom is poverty, not possession; not decisions for Jesus Christ, but a sense of absolute futility — I cannot begin to do it. Then Jesus says — Blessed are you. That is the entrance, and it does take us a long while to believe we are poor! The knowledge of our own poverty brings us to the moral frontier where Jesus Christ works.

— Oswald Chambers

2. Trying to buy a stairway to Heaven is utterly futile. Will we accept that?

Only at the cross — where the sinless Christ became sin for us — is our innocence exposed as the appalling fraud that it is. Only at the cross do we see our ugliness truly and starkly. And only at the cross can grace finally enter in, when we discover to our surprise that we are loved. — Unknown

3. Those who come sincerely empty are wrapped in a blanket of grace. Will we receive that?

If we allow our mind simply to listen, we perhaps begin to hear our heart speak — faintly, beneath the clatter. It says, “I am so weary, so lost. I have no energy to redeem myself. How I long for rest.” Our mind hears these words and realize it is of no use to ask God to give us energy to make our way back up the cliff over which we have fallen. We need the Good Shepherd to come and get us. If we allow our heart to give our mind the words to pray, we say, “Jesus, help me. All my lovers have failed me. Forgive me. I cannot quench my thirst. Give me the water of life.”

— Theophan, the Recluse, 19th c, Russian Orthodox Priest

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Share a time in your life when you were poor or felt poor. What feelings come to mind?
- Reflect on or discuss the meaning of the phrase “poor in spirit.”
- Was there one idea in last weekend’s message that really struck home with you?
- In your own life, how have you been blessed by acknowledging your spiritual needs?
- How would the idea of “poor in spirit” be considered an affront to the religious leaders and the Pharisees of the day?
- Can you identify any parallels with people’s unwillingness to acknowledge their need for God today?
- How does this truth serve, in a sense, as the foundation for the other kingdom realities that follow it?
- If someone asked you, “So how do I become poor in spirit?” what sort of things would you want to share with them?
- How is Jesus’ parable of the Pharisee and tax collector in Luke 18:9-14 a case study of what Jesus is telling us here?
- How might “poor in spirit” change some specific aspect of a person’s life? How might it affect the way they pray, how they relate to others?
- Going forward, how does this teaching from Jesus inform your life right now?